

THE WORD OF LIFE

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"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3)



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WORD OF LIFE

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"In The Beginning Was

The Word



And the Word was With God, and the Word was God."

(John 1:1)

Amazing are the Coptic **Liturgical Readings**, especially those are offered in the Nativity Season. In this period, the Church offers a precise theological and spiritual insight, through the awesome hymns and the carefully selected of the Biblical readings. The main theme for these readings is the '**Word of Good.**'

Obedience to the commandments of God through faith is the accesses to the Mystery of Incarnation. In the parable of the sower, the word of God is the seed for the soil. Through his **obedience** to the Word of God, Abraham manifested his faith, "and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Ro 4:3). Hence, he received the promises, "so that he became the father of all those who believe" (Ro 4:11). Similarly, "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for **obedience** to the faith among all nations for His name" (Ro 1:5). (All these verses are in the readings of the first Sunday of Kiahk).

Moses is the one who "received the **living oracles to give** to us" (Act 7: 38). And, through **obedience** of the Word, Moses furnished the tabernacle, for the rest of the Lord in wilderness, according to the pattern that he had seen. David who meditated and praised the Word of God, "found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands"" (Act 7: 46-48).

St. Mary 'has found favor with God' through her **obedience** to the **word**, "Let it be to me according to your **word**", hence the Lord found his dwelling in her womb. She found the "dwelling for the rest of the Lord", for her father David who did not succeed to find it. She became the tabernacle of witness which Moses saw its pattern in the wilderness. Mary received the promises, which her father Abraham died in faith without receiving them, but having seen them afar off were assured of them and embraced them. Abraham through the righteousness of faith became the father of all believers. Similarly St. Mary through her faith became the new Eve, the mother of all the beings to live forever.

Obedience to the word of God is our means for the understanding and embracing of the mystery of incarnation, to find a dwelling for the Lord to rest inside us. **The obedience** of God's word is the sign of our



love to God, as Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and **make Our home** with him" (Jon 14: 23). Also, keeping Jesus word shows the faith, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love" (Eph 3:17). "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1Co 3: 16). Through loving God and keeping the true faith the Holy Trinity dwells in us, "... For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them and walk among them" (2Co 6: 16). "This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it" (Ps 132:14).

The efficacies and the blessings of the mystery of incarnation are received in our **New Birth** through **obedience** to the word of God. Hence, the liturgical readings in the beginning of the Nativity Season urge us to listen to the **word of God** earnestly, "**Listen!** Behold, a sower went out to sow..." (Mr 4:3). The Pauline reading in the feast of nativity empathizes the same theme, "Therefore we must give the more **earnest heed** to the things we have heard, lest we drift away... how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him," (Heb 2: 1-3). At the end of the season, the readings conclude this theme, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (Jon 1. 1-4)

Our **New Birth** is the gift we receive through the word of God. "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger", **the manger of the heart**.

F.Youssef



IN THIS ISSUE

The English Section:

The first article, "Be Transformed", by *Fr. Matta El-Meskeen* is a call for transformation. In this second part of the article, the author pursued the call for transformation in the epistles of St. Paul.

The second article is, "The Heavenly Banquet and The Table of the Messiah in the NT", by *Rodolph Yanney, MD*. In this part, the writer presents the Lord's teachings on Eucharist in the Gospel of John.

The third article is from the great contemporary Russian Orthodox writings, "The Lost Scriptural Mind" by *Fr. Georges Florovsky*. In the



second part of the article, the author emphasize on the importance of considering the unity of Christ's Natures (Divine & Human) in teaching the modern man. This is to comply with the conclusion of the Ecumenical Councils and the teaching and doctrine of St. Cyril of Alexandria (The Pillar of Orthodoxy).

The fourth article, "The Just Shall Live By Faith" by *M. Helmy* discusses the subject, in the light of the sayings of St. John Chrysostom, as shown in his commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans

The Arabic Section:

The first article, "We Want to See Jesus", by *Dr. Guirguis A. Ibrahim, PhD.* addresses the need of the people to see Jesus. There are many talks and books about a man called Jesus, but what the people hear and read, looks as nice but impractical values, which no one can comply with. Even many of the authors who write and talk about Jesus can't implement his teachings. The world is in need to see Jesus alive in the life of the teachers of Christianity rather than to hear more teachings.

The second article is "The Bible & The Doctrine of the Millennial Kingdom" by *Fouad Youssef*. It discusses the Biblical view, which is the basis for the orthodox understanding of this doctrine.

The Third article, "For Indeed, The Kingdom Of God Is Within You", By *Origen*, is from the fathers teachings. *Origen's* reflections on this verse, explain the spiritual meanings, which direct to our unity with God and the receiving of our new birth and resurrection in Christ.

The last Arabic article is "The Organization of The First Season of the Coptic Lectionary" by *Fouad N. Youssef*. This subject is very important and vital to the Coptic preachers and teachers of the word.

We thank every person who offered help in publishing and distributing the magazine, asking the Lord to reward them with His heavenly blessings. Also, we ask for your continued prayers for the success of this work serving the "Word of Life."

REMINDER

We remind all members to renew their subscription for the Fourth Volume of Word of Life Magazine.



A Message To Those Who Look Forward To A Better Life

Be Transformed

Part II

By Father Matta el Meskeen

This is a continuation to the first part presented in the last issue in which Father Matta talked about the inevitability of continuous change in the Christian life, which has two parts, Divine and human. He showed how they are connected and each drives the other. In this issue he talks about God's commandments for change.

God's Commandments in the Gospel inciting to Change

It is clear that change in a Christian life is an important process, God having set its rules with extreme precision. God has directly offered us this new life with the self-will, thoughts, and behavior, through the sacraments as a continuous and permanent change (transformation). Having given us this new life freely, God gave us with it the Gospel, His active living word, to be our continual source for the capacity to change from a lame, evil will in us into a capable good will, from an evil and inadequate mind into a spiritual one voicing God's glory, from a sick behavior servile to the desires of the flesh into a spiritual virtuous behavior witness to God's grace. Because it is not through the spoken knowledge alone that we bear witness to God but it is through the works in us that we bear witness to Him as the Apostle Paul's words in the book of Titus: "They profess to know God, but they deny him by their deeds" (Tit 1:16).

Let us listen to God's commandments emphasizing and firmly inciting us to change:

The Epistle to the Romans:

"Do not be conformed to this world, but *be transformed* by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2). The aim of change is to gain the high quality of Divine willpower, and to enjoy the absoluteness of God.

"So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (6:11). The change from death to life required here is that of a type of intellect man must daily remember it over.

"No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life (daily change from death to life), and present



your members to God as instruments of righteousness. (The change through willpower from sin to righteousness as a commandment. The mystery being:) For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (6: 13, 14). The Apostle Paul explains here the ability to change, may the need and its inevitability, as we received the grace within us instead of the law that ruled us. “You are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness” (6:16). (Obedience is self-will.)

“But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart (completely faithful) to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted” (6:17) That is to say, the Gospel and the oral tradition of the Fathers. The Gospel here proves to be a *freeing power*.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (The power of His mercy preserved in the Gospel is also the mystery of transformation being a commandment) that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (12:1 NKJV).

“Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (13:12). Laying aside and putting on here is a complete and final illustrated connotation of transformation being a continuous process. “Let us live honorably as in the day (light), not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy” (13:13). (Darkness ... darkness ... darkness.) “Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh (sin), to gratify its desires” (13:14). (Beware of sin = mind, willpower, conduct).

The First Epistle to the Corinthians:

“But strive for the greater gifts” (12:31). Inflaming self-will requires strength, preparation, and support, as the intensity required is supernatural. “Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy” (14:1). (The Commandment containing the secret to success to him who obeys.)

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians:

“And all of us, with unveiled faces (without the veil of the Law), seeing (an actual fact) the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (3:18). (The change towards the fullness of Christ’s image through the power of the Spirit.)

“... not to accept the grace of God in vain” (6:1). This means that we must not cease the struggle or daily diligence in striving to change.



“Since we have these promises (through the Gospel), beloved, let us cleanse ourselves (proof of the presence of our new will and an existence of purity with grace) from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God” (7:1).

“I myself, Paul, appeal to you ... Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human (Grace and the Gospel), but they have divine power to destroy strongholds (exposing and shaming the thoughts and conduct of the old self). We destroy arguments (old ideas) and every proud obstacle (the devil’s pride and doubts) raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought (human) captive to obey Christ (through the Gospel)” (10:3-5).

The Epistle to the Galatians

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (3:27). (As death dons life, the change is inherent with baptism, and its steadfastness a truth that exists in us.)

“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (5:1). (Any bond without Christ is a yoke of slavery).

“Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh” (5:16). (Through the Holy Spirit: i.e. the desires exist in us but we must not adhere to them. Here to behave spiritually is a Divine Commandment as well as to deny the gratification of fleshly desires.) “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law (the only stipulation for freedom). Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these (The works of the flesh have no power over us, but it is us who give it the power through our submission to them). ... And those who belong to Christ Jesus (through baptism) have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (An existing state and truth that need work). If we live by the Spirit (the Holy Spirit), let us also be guided by the Spirit” (5:18-25). (If we were born by the water and the Spirit, for Christ, then we must walk in the Spirit, according to the Gospel.)

The Epistle to the Ephesians:

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love (Christ to enter in us expects a special stature of love). I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to



know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (3:17-19). This is the utmost limit of change and its perfection, and therefore a fixed design the saints fulfilled.

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (4:1). (To respond to change according to the Gospel.)

“Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds (The relation between the state of mind and conduct is made clear, if the conduct is wrong then the mind is sick. “Because you the judge are doing the very same things” (Rom 2:1)). They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. That is not the way you learned Christ! (Through the Gospel and the oral tradition of the forefathers). For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds (in the light of the work of knowledge in the Gospel, the means being the Gospel), and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (4:17-24). (The qualification for the new man is a direct allusion to baptism.)

“Therefore be imitators of God, (Imitators of God: when you feel that you have begun to love others without return even a negative return, know then that the Divine love has started to pour into you) as beloved children, (children resemble their father) and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us” (5:1, 2). “Everyone who loves the parent loves the child” (1 John 5:1).

“But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned (not to be mentioned) among you, as is proper among saints. ... for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be associated with them (departing from the system of holiness is extremely dangerous). For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light” (5:3, 6-8). (A complete transformation or change).

“Live as children of light...Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord” (5:8, 10) (Every change produces a test of what is pleasing to the Lord.)



“Therefore it says, ‘Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you’ ” (5:14). (A Passover from death to resurrection.)

“So do not be foolish (the pleasures of the flesh are spiritual folly), but understand what the will of the Lord is” (5:17). (A call to a quick transformation from the foolishness of the flesh to spiritual awareness.)

“Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (A registered sign, a sign of fullness). Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” (5:18-21). (The spiritual man easily submits to every plan because he has no ego.)

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God” (6:10, 11). (Faith and hope are the testimony, internal armor, and source of internal power that is within us).

The Epistle to the Philippians:

“Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). (A constitution and system; the gospel, nothing else, God is a whole that cannot be divided up.)

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ” (2:5). (The steps of descent are the mystery of glory and elevation – the cross or war).

“Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you (through the sacrament, mystery, and the Gospel), enabling you both to will (self will) and to work (conduct) for his good pleasure” (2:12, 13). (Joyfully as the loss is horrendous and the gain fantastic.)

“Stand firm thus in the Lord.... Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” (4:1, 4). (It is a commandment based on a truth and rightly that need nothing but to be begun and immediately carried out with continual perseverance.)

Think about these things ... “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise” (4:8). (The boundaries of the new mind with Christ).

The Epistle to the Colossians:

“So that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge



of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son" (1:10-13). (The change here is extraordinary. It is an act of transport, as taking hold of someone crossing an abyss.)

"And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death (in baptism), so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him (Through death He fulfilled every penalty that can be complained about on the part of the devil)— provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel" (1:21-23). (The Gospel!...the Gospel!).

"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him (conduct is not as an individual, nor personal, it is a style, evangelical, like all the saints; the moment we accept Christ as Savior, Redeemer and King, its power starts as a gift), rooted and built up in him" (2:6, 7). (Founding, then building).

"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, ... In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision (baptism), by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (2:9-12). (Christ died and was buried to pay the price and penalty of the disgrace of sins and then resurrected from among the dead. Through death and the resurrection Christ removed the body of human sin and gave us the body of His glory. In baptism we are buried with Him and rise with Him thus removing through Him our sinful human bodies. In baptism we don the whole fullness of Christ.)

"You have died (sin, the flesh and the world), and your life (in the resurrection) is hidden with Christ in God" (3:3). (God's work is in secret through Christ). Therefore, "whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient" (3:5, 6). (God's commandment concerns not only our minds but also the members of our body.)

"Seeing that you have stripped off the old self (through burial with Christ in baptism) with its practices, and have clothed yourselves with



the new self (through the resurrection), which is being renewed in knowledge (the Gospel) according to the image of its creator” (3:9, 10).

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (3:12). (God’s children’s characteristics).

“Clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (3:14). (God’s nature qualifying for inheritance and union.) “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (3:16). (The Gospel becomes the capital of everlasting life. He who is rich in the word is rich in Christ.) “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving” (4:2). (The new man’s work in separation from the world.)

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians:

“We ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus (the main point of the matter is that Christ is responsible for the commandment) that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more” (4:1). (Here the Gospel and tradition are the sure and effective manner of conduct.)

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication” (4:3). (The practical conduct for sanctification is itself God’s will and the target of the renewed self will.)

“We urge you, beloved, to do so more and more” (4:10). (Limitless change and growth.)

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus (impossible without Him) for you” (5:16-18).

“Abstain from every form of evil” (5:22). (Never belittle sin for it begins as a tiny motion.)

“May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely (the fulfillment of sanctification is a very special work of God – sanctification begins with us and is completed through God); and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:23). (Perfection is an outstanding work of God.) “The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this” (5:24). (This means that it is not because of our call or encouragement but originally due to a calling from God, who is truthful and will surely act according to His calling.)

(To be continued).



HEAVENLY BANQUET AND TABLE OF THE MESSIAH



B-In the New Testament (2)

By: Rodolph Yanney, M.D.

The Eucharistic 'Signs' in St. John's Gospel:

(1) The Feeding of the Multitudes

Of the seven miracles that St. John has chosen to put in his gospel from the numerous miracles performed by the Lord and recorded in the other gospels, two deal with the Eucharist, his first miracle at Cana and the feeding of the multitude's. John does not call them miracles but 'signs' (*Simeon* in Greek), something like the traffic sign that define the way. Biblical scholars have called the first part of St. John's Gospel containing these miracles 'The Book of Signs' (chapters 3-12). Often in the Gospel of St. John the visible reality appears as the sign of an invisible reality. The loaves of the multiplication are figures of the word of God and of the Eucharist¹ The author of *The Imitation of Christ* meditates on this double meaning:

"Whilst I am kept in the prison of this body I acknowledge myself to need two things, namely, food and light. Thou hast therefore given to me, weak as I am, Thy sacred Body, for the nourishment of my soul and body, and Thou hast set "Thy word as a lamp to my feet." (Ps 118:105).

"Without these two I could not well live, for the word of God is the light of my soul and thy sacrament is the bread of life. (John 6: 35).

"These also may be called the two tables set on either side in the storehouse of thy holy church. One is the table of the holy altar having the holy bread, that is, the precious Body of Christ; the other is that of the divine law, containing Thy holy doctrine, teaching the right *faith*, and firmly leading even within the veil, where is the holy of holies.

¹ Danielou: *The Bible and the Liturgy*, op. cit., 209-210.



“Thanks be to Thee, O Lord Jesus, Light of eternal Light, for the table of holy doctrine which Thou hast afforded us by the ministry of Thy servants, the prophets and apostles, and teachers. “Thanks be to Thee, O Thou Creator and Redeemer of men, Who to manifest Thy love to the whole world hast prepared a great supper (Luke 14: 16), wherein Thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but Thy most sacred Body and Blood; rejoicing all the faithful with Thy holy banquet, and inebriating them with the cup of salvation (Psalm 23: 5), in which are all the delights of paradise; and the holy angels feast with us, but with a more happy sweetness”.²

St. John’s Gospel concludes the miracle of the loaves saying, “When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!” (John.6: 14). This gives us the key to the spiritual (or real) interpretation of the miracle, and hence of the whole chapter. In the lectionary of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the miracle of the loaves in the synoptic gospels, as well the related discussion about it in John 6, are repeated many times in the year. Yet the preachers, who strain themselves when they try to get a new moral lesson from the text for each sermon, practically never think of addressing its spiritual interpretation concerning the Eucharist. The phrase ‘the prophet’ in John 6: 14 means more than an ordinary prophet; it is a reminder of Moses’ prophecy about the Messiah (Christ) in Deuteronomy 18: 15. When the multitude ate of the great table that the Lord has given them in the wilderness, they at once concluded that he is the Messiah for whom they have been waiting for generations to rule over them (John 6: 15; Isaiah 25: 6).

Some theologians see that the Feeding of the Multitudes was more than a great miracle; it was rather an introduction to the Messianic Banquet. Our Lord’s discourse following it in John 6 is considered a step to what He declared at the Last Supper. Other biblical commentators have observed that our Lord concluded his ministry in Galilee with the feeding of the five thousands, and his ministry in Perea with the feeding of the four thousands; and at last he concluded his work in Judea, as well as all his earthly ministry before the Cross (John 17: 4) by the table of the Last Supper which is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet (Matt. 26: 29). Which is for all nations (Isaiah 25: 20) when “men will come from east and

² *Imitation of Christ* 4: 11: 4, 5.



west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God (Luke. 13: 29).

The Eucharistic interpretation of the miracle is evident in the Coptic Church Liturgies that go back to the patristic era. In the Coptic Liturgy of St. Basil, the priest says in the institution narrative, "He looked up towards heaven, to you O God, who are his Father and Master of everyone" The phrase 'He looked up towards heaven' does not come in the gospels in the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper but comes in the miracle of the loaves. In the Coptic Liturgy of St. Gregory the Theologian (addressed to the Son), the priest says, "Thou didst take bread into thy holy and, spotless and immaculate and blessed and life-giving hands. Thou didst look up to heaven, to God, to thy Father and the Lord of all" These liturgical texts have no biblical references in the Last Supper, but in the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves (Matt.14: 19; Mark 6: 41; Luke 9: 16),

It is significant that in the discourse in the gospel of St. John about the miracle, the evangelist used two different Greek verbs for 'eating':

(1) *Phago*. This was used in the first part of the discourse (John 6, verses 49, 50, 51 and 53 in which our Lord spoke about hearing his word as a basis for faith in him.

(2) *Trogo* (literally means chewing). This was used in the second part (verses 54, 57 and 58) when the Lord was addressing the Eucharist. There is actual eating the Body (John 6: 54, 57, 58): as well as drinking the blood of the Lord (John 56)

[54] He who *eats* my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

[56] He who eats my flesh *and drinks my blood* abides in me and I in him.

[57] As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who *eats* me will live because of me.

[58] This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who *eats* this bread will live for ever."

Commenting on the words of our Lord, "I am the bread of life" (John 6: 48), St. John Chrysostom says in his Commentary on St. John: "He calls Himself, (ver. 48) "the bread of life," because He maintains our life both which is and which is to be, and says, "Whosoever shall eat of this bread shall live for ever." By "bread" He means here either His saving doctrines or the faith, which is in Him, or His own Body; for both nerve the soul..." "We become one Body, and "members of His flesh and of His bones." (Eph. v. 30.) ... Let us be blended into that flesh. ...He has given



to those who desire Him not only to see Him, but even to touch, and eat Him, and fix their teeth in His flesh, and to embrace Him, and satisfy all their love. Let us then return from that table like lions breathing fire, having become terrible to the devil; thinking on our Head, and on the love which He has shown for us.³

(2) *The Marriage Feast at Cana*

God fed his people in their exodus from Egypt with the manna that came down from heaven, and He gave them water to drink from a rock that followed them (1 Cor. 10:5). On his short earthly ministry, our Lord has realized the antitype of those two events in two miracles, witnessed by many, as an allusion to the New Exodus. As the miracle of Feeding the Multitudes referred back to the manna and forward to the Eucharist, the spiritual food of the faithful in their sojourn on earth; in the same way the change of water to wine in the six stone jars at Cana referred back to the water issued from the rock, and forward to the cup of the Eucharist containing the divine Blood and the sign of joy in the heavenly banquet. (Song of Solomon 5: 1; Isaiah 25: 6). St. John the Apostle, the only Evangelist who recorded the miracle, has given many keys that helped generations of biblical students reach its spiritual meaning. It was the first miracle of our Lord, and from the earliest centuries the Church has considered it a part of the feasts of Epiphany (theophany), when He ‘manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him’ (John 2: 11). The Coptic Orthodox Church celebrates for this miracle on the third day after Epiphany (John 2: 1). Such words as the ‘third day’, and the ‘hour’ (John 2: 4) lead us at once to the work of the Lord in our salvation in his death and resurrection. Like all the miracles mentioned by St. John, the visible miracle has changed to a ‘sign’, or a ‘sacrament’. One is not any more in the marriage feast at Cana, but in ‘the Lord’s hour’, when He started by the Eucharist (John 13: 1); and on the third day, the day of our Lord’s resurrection, and of our own resurrection at the time of the ‘last trumpet’ when we meet him in the eternal marriage feast (Matt. 25: 6, 7).

This has been how the ancient Church Fathers interpreted the miracle. In the third century St. Cyprian of Carthage writes, “Since spiritual grace was lacking to the Jews, their wine was failing. For the vine of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel. But Christ, teaching that the people of the Gentiles were to succeed the Jews, changed water into wine, that is to say, he showed that, at the marriage of Christ and the

³ John Chrysostom: *homilies on the Gospel of John*: Homily 46: 1, 3 (on John 6), adapted from the translation of NPNF.



Church it is the people of the Gentiles who will crowd in, while the Jews will fail to come.”⁴ Jean Danielou comments on this saying, “Thus the wedding of Cana prefigures the marriage of Christ and the Church to which the nations are invited, as is signified by the substitution of wine, symbol of messianic joy, for the water of Jewish purification. And the Eucharistic banquet is the sacrament of the participation of the nations in this wedding feast.”⁵

In the middle of the fourth century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem says:

“He once in Cana of Galilee, turned the water into wine, akin to blood, and is it incredible that He should have turned wine into blood? When called to a bodily marriage, He miraculously wrought that wonderful work; and on the children of the bride-chamber, shall He not much rather be acknowledged to have bestowed the fruition of His Body and Blood? “Wherefore with full assurance let us partake as of the Body and Blood of Christ: for in the figure of Bread is given to thee His Body, and in the figure of Wine His Blood; that thou by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, gayest be made of the same body and the same blood with Him. For thus we come to bear Christ in us, because His Body and Blood are distributed through our members; thus it is that, according to the blessed Peter, we became partakers of the divine nature.”⁶

Cardinal Danielou comments on these passages of St. Cyril saying, “Let us notice that here the emphasis is put at once on the symbol of the one and on that of the marriage. Both the one and the other are related to the Eucharist. The wine is the visible sign; the marriage shows that in the Eucharist the nuptial union of Christ and the Church is consummated in the soul of the Christian”⁷

This eternal marriage feast in which Christ is united to the Church, and hence every soul becomes his bride, is a biblical teaching which is found throughout the New Testament from its beginning to its end. It is the same relation that existed between God and his people in the Old Testament. The four gospels speak of Christ as the Bridegroom:

⁴ Cyprian: Letter 63: 22, quoted in Danielou: *The Bible and the Liturgy*, op. cit., page 220

⁵ : *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Ibid. 220

⁶ Cyril of Jerusalem: LECTURE 12 ((On the mysteries. IV), NPNF: 2, 3.

⁷ *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Ibid, pp. 220, 221.



- “And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?’ ” (Matt. 9: 15; Cp. Mark 9: 2 & Luke 5: 34, 35).
- St. Paul addresses the Corinthian Church saying; “I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband. (2 Cor. 11: 2).
- The Book of Revelation which describes the heavenly liturgy in several chapters describes the relation between Christ and the Church in a language that brings to mind that of the ‘Song of Solomon, “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband “(Revelation 21: 2), and, “having the glory of God” (Rev. 21: 11). In this Church, every believer becomes “a pillar in the temple of God” (Rev. 3: 12).

This heavenly marriage is not something limited to the eternal glory in heaven, but it is actually consummated in the Eucharist. St. Paul describes this in relation to the Sacrament of Christian marriage, which is only a type; “For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church.” (Eph.5: 29- 32).



To be continued



FROM THE GREAT ORTHODOX CONTEMPORARY WRITINGS

THE LOST SCRIPTURAL MIND

Part II

Fr. Georges Florovsky

What St. Cyril's Teachings Meant[†]

"And was made man." What is the ultimate connotation of this creedal statement? Or, in other words, *who* was Jesus, the Christ and the Lord? What does it mean, in the language of the Cyrillian Teachings[†], that the same Jesus was "perfect man" and "perfect God," yet a single and unique personality? "Modern man" is usually very critical of the Cyrillian Teachings[†] definition. It fails to convey any meaning to him. The "imagery" of the creed is for him nothing more than a piece of poetry, if anything at all. The whole approach, I think, is wrong. The "definition" of St. Cyril[†] is not a metaphysical statement, and was never meant to be treated as such. Nor was the mystery of the Incarnation just a "metaphysical miracle." The formula of St. Cyril[†] was a statement of faith, and therefore cannot be understood when taken out of the total experience of the church. In fact, it is an "existential statement."

St. Cyril formula[†] is, as it were, an intellectual contour of the mystery which is apprehended by faith. Our Redeemer is *not* a man, but God *himself*. Here lies the existential emphasis of the statement. Our Redeemer is one who "came down" and who, by "being made man," identified himself with men in the fellowship of a truly human life and nature. Not only the initiative was divine, but the Captain of Salvation was a divine Person. The fullness of the human nature of Christ means simply the adequacy and truth of this redeeming identification. God enters human history and becomes a historical person.

This sounds paradoxical. Indeed there is a mystery: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh." But this mystery was a revelation; the true character of God had

[†] In the original text, the author used the terms "**Chalcedon**" and **Chalcedon's formula**" but what he actually means, St. Cyril's teachings. The Council of Chalcedon accepted and authorized St. Cyril's teachings in spite of its prejudice against St. Dioscurus and the Coptic Church. Hence we have replaced the terms "Chalcedon" and "Chalcedon's formula" in this article to "St. Cyril's Teachings", for clarification.



been disclosed in the Incarnation. God was so much and so intimately concerned with the destiny of man (and precisely with the destiny of every one of "the little ones") as to intervene *in person* in the chaos and misery of the lost life. The divine providence therefore is not merely an omnipotent ruling of the universe from an august distance by the divine majesty, but a kenosis, a "self-humiliation" of the God of glory. There is a *personal* relationship between God and man.

Tragedy in a New Light

The whole of the human tragedy appears therefore in a new light. The mystery of the Incarnation was a mystery of the love divine, of the divine identification with lost man. And the climax of Incarnation was the cross. It is the turning point of human destiny. But the awful mystery of the cross is comprehensible only in the wider perspective of an integral Christology; that is, only if we believe that the Crucified was in very truth "the Son of the living God." The death of Christ was God's entrance into the misery of human death (again *in person*), a descent into Hades, and this meant the end of death and the inauguration of life everlasting for man.

There is an amazing coherence in the body of the traditional doctrine. But it can be apprehended and understood only in the living context of faith, by which I mean in a personal communion with the personal God. Faith alone makes formulas convincing; faith alone makes formulas live. "It seems paradoxical, yet it is the experience of all observers of spiritual things: no one profits by the Gospels unless he be first in love with Christ." For Christ is not a text but a living Person, and he abides in his body, the church.

A New Nestorianism

It may seem ridiculous to suggest that one should preach the Cyrillian doctrine "in a time such as this." Yet it is precisely this doctrine < that reality to which this doctrine bears witness < that can change the whole spiritual outlook of modern man. It brings him a true freedom. Man is not alone in this world, and God is taking personal interest in the events of human history. This is an immediate implication of the integral conception of the Incarnation. It is an illusion that the Christological disputes of the past are irrelevant to the contemporary situation. In fact, they are continued and repeated in the controversies of our own age. Modern man, deliberately or subconsciously, is tempted by the Nestorian extreme. That is to say, he does not take the Incarnation in earnest. He



does not dare to believe that Christ is a divine person. He wants to have a *human* redeemer, only assisted by God. He is more interested in human psychology of the Redeemer than in the mystery of the divine love. Because, in the last resort, he believes optimistically in the dignity of man.

A New Eutychianism

On the other extreme we have in our days a revival of "Eutychianism" tendencies in theology and religion, when man is reduced to complete passivity and is allowed only to listen and to hope. The present tension between "liberalism" and "neo-orthodoxy" is in fact a re-enactment of the old Christological struggle, on a new existential level and in a new spiritual key. The conflict will never be settled or solved in the field of theology, unless a wider vision is acquired.

In the early church the preaching was emphatically theological. It was not a vain speculation. The New Testament itself is a theological book. Neglect of theology in the instruction given to laity in modern times is responsible both for the decay of personal religion and for that sense of frustration which dominates the modern mood. What we need in Christendom "in a time such as this" is precisely a sound and existential theology. In fact, both clergy and the laity are hungry for theology. And because no theology is usually preached, they adopt some "strange ideologies" and combine them with the fragments of traditional beliefs. The whole appeal of the "rival gospel" in our days is that they offer some sort of pseudo theology, a system of pseudo dogmas. They are gladly accepted by those who cannot find any theology in the reduced Christianity of "modern" style. That existential alternative which many face in our days has been aptly formulated by an English theologian, "Dogma or death." The age of a-dogmatism and pragmatism has closed. And therefore the ministers of the church have to preach again doctrines and dogmas (the Word of God).

The Modern Crisis

The first task of the contemporary preacher is the "reconstruction of belief." It is by no means an intellectual endeavor. Belief is just the map of the true world, and should not be mistaken for reality. Modern man has been too much concerned with his own ideas and convictions, his own attitudes and reactions. The modern crisis precipitated by humanism (an undeniable fact) has been brought about by the rediscovery of the real world, in which we do believe. The rediscovery of the church is the



most decisive aspect of this new spiritual realism. Reality is no more screened from us by the wall of our own ideas. It is again accessible. It is again realized that the church is not just a company of believers, but the "Body of Christ." This is a rediscovery of a new dimension, a rediscovery of the continuing presence of the divine Redeemer in the midst of his faithful flock. This discovery throws a new flood of light on the misery of our disintegrated existence in a world thoroughly secularized. It is already recognized by many that the true solution of all social problems lies somehow in the reconstruction of the church. "In a time such as this" one has to preach the "whole Christ," Christ and the church (*totus Christus, caput et corpus*), to use the famous phrase of St. Augustine. Possibly this preaching is still unusual, but it seems to be the only way to preach the Word of God efficiently in a period of doom and despair like ours.

The Relevance of the Fathers

I have often a strange feeling. When I read the ancient classics of Christian theology, the fathers of the church, I find them more relevant to the troubles and problems of my own time than the production of modern theologians. The fathers were wrestling with existential problems, with those revelations of the eternal issues which were described and recorded in Holy Scripture. I would risk a suggestion that St. Athanasius and St. Augustine are much more up to date than many of our theological contemporaries. The reason is very simple: they were dealing with things and not with the maps, they were concerned not so much with what man can believe as with what God had done for man. We have, "in a time such as this," to enlarge our perspective, to acknowledge the masters of old, and to attempt for our own age an existential synthesis of Christian experience.





The Just Shall Live By Faith⁸

M. Helmy

“A spiritual trumpet”—such is what St. John Chrysostom called St. Paul’s great epistle to the Romans. St. Paul explains that Christianity is built upon faith in Christ, that it is its very foundation. But the Jews were taken up with rituals and strict adherence to the law and forgot the “weightier matters,” justice, mercy, and *faith*. This preoccupation with one’s own works and goodness is not limited to Jews, or to the first century when new moons were observed. It is still around in our day, and can be found within us.

St. Paul begins with a quote from the Psalms to present his case: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.” (Ro 4:7-8) In his homilies on Romans, St. John Chrysostom says: “How great a thing it is to...have full confidence that God is able...to free a man who has lived in impiety...even to make him just, and to count him worthy of immortal honors.” He says that the type of person who seeks salvation by works has his eyes upon himself, and believes glory is *due* to him. As St. Paul says, “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as *debt*.” But a man who believes God can cleanse from sin glorifies God, and ascribes all the praise to Him, to His love and mercy. St. Chrysostom says that such a person “receives that opinion of Him which is fitting, and glorifies Him, and feels wonder at Him more than that evinced by works. For that glorying (i.e. in works) pertains to him that does aright, but this glorifies God, and lies wholly in Him. For he glories at conceiving great things concerning Him, which redound to His glory.” He who has all his faith in God discards himself, his abilities and deficiencies, and puts all his hope in God’s salvation.

St. Paul uses a seemingly ironic example to show the importance of faith: Abraham, the icon of righteousness to the Jews. Abraham was a man of virtues; he was obedient, sacrificial, and hospitable. So the Jews hailed him as a man of God because of his works, as being accepted because he was “good.” But St. Paul pushes all that aside; he instead dwells on Abraham’s belief in God’s promises: “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, *giving glory to God*,

⁸ Ref: St John Chrysostom. *Homilies on Romans*. NFPF. Vol. 11.



being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also *able to perform*.” (Ro 4:20-21) This is true faith, which gives God His proper place and honor, believing He is “able to perform” His promise, giving glory to Him before the promise is fulfilled. St. Paul does not even mention Abraham’s other great deeds, which the Jews were so enthralled by. He is saying, “Not because of those things was Abraham considered righteous, but only because of his faith in God; he *believed*.” St. Chrysostom, in commentating on this point, says: “For a person richly adorned with good deeds, not to be made just from hence, but from faith, is the thing to cause wonder, and to set the power of faith in a strong light.” For it was not Abraham’s good works which made him righteous before God, but his faith. And truly, what do we constantly hear from Christ in the gospels, what does He continually exhort the people about? “Where is your faith?” (Lk 8:25), “O faithless and perverse generation!” (Mt 17:17), “Your faith has healed you” (Lk 18:42). He never rejoiced in any other virtue as He did in this one, repeatedly proclaiming what is needed and what is missing, the essential: faith. “When the Son of Man returns, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Lk 18:8) So it is faith that our Lord is seeking in us. But those who look to establish their own righteousness have not understood that the true righteous acts are the fruit of faith. As we pray before each hour in the Agpeya, “You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings...”

The objection that arises to St. Paul’s explanation is that if humanity was in need to be freed from the works of the law, then the law proved itself to be flawed. For St. Paul also writes, “the letter [law] kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (2 Cor. 3:6) The law, rather than correcting man, caused him to sin, leading to death, and must therefore be a failure. To this objection St. Paul writes, “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘*You shall not covet.*’” (Ro 7:7) St. Chrysostom interprets this passage saying that when we “desire a thing, and then are hindered of it, the flame of the desire is but increased. Now this came not of the law...For it did not give existence to sin that before was not, but only pointed out what had escaped notice...When [the law] came...[the Jews] were made acquainted with the fact that they had been sinning.” That is, when the law was given and the commandments written out and explained, the people realized they had been doing those things that were wrong. As St. Paul says, “...sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.” (Ro 7:13) The people realized their sinfulness which they were previously unaware of.

There has been much criticism from outside as well as inside the Orthodox Church about the preservation of rituals and tradition, with the



overall atmosphere of the Church, which may easily cause a person to become a “Pharisee.” St. Paul’s replies to the Jews can be the same replies to such criticism. For it is because of no short-coming on the Church’s part, but on the individual’s. As Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, a Russian Orthodox priest, once said: “[False] religion amplifies all that is petty and low in man.” Such a person who falls into external religion falls, not because of the rituals or the nature of the Church, but because there is something inside him that causes him to fall. This weakness exists apart from the Church or any other external factor. But being in the Church gives the person a chance to discover his pride when it is manifested, “amplified,” for him through his involvement. As St. Chrysostom was quoted previously, man was “made acquainted with the fact that [he] had been sinning.” Otherwise, he may not have realized it. Once he realizes he has been holding a hypocritical view of the rituals or other Church activities, he must begin to change. No matter how much the rituals are changed or edited, a true improvement will come about only by a change within himself.

Many times when a sin such as this pride is unmasked, a person feels despair, and does not realize that he has been given an opportunity for correction and is now on the road to improvement. Realizing the problem “is no small point, with a view to getting free from wickedness,” as St. Chrysostom says. And St. Paul makes this very clear in his epistle. After he discusses the law which revealed man’s sinfulness and evil inclinations, he includes himself, the apostle to whom Christ appeared, into the problem of all humanity: “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice... I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” (Ro 7:19, 23) This is the plight of each person who is trying to reach the goal, unity with Christ. When realizing these obstacles, St. Paul exclaims, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Ro 7:24) Indeed, it seems to be impossible and unattainable, and it is when considering only our works (the law) as the factor. But St. Paul quickly brings in his beginning subject of faith as salvation: “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Ro 7:25) He reminds us of Christ, who has saved us from this bondage. For this is what it comes down to: faith in the salvation of Christ and God’s promise. With this faith we are saved, both from eternal condemnation and hopelessness in this world; and there is no longer anything to fear. As St. Chrysostom says, “What is there then to prevent us any more from obtaining the things to come? Nothing!”

